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PP RUEHDT RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHPB
DE RUEHHM #1413/01 3541252
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 201252Z DEC 06
FM AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1892
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY 1995
RUEHHI/AMEMBASSY HANOI PRIORITY 1331
RUCNARF/ASEAN REGIONAL FORUM COLLECTIVE
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0014
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0016
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG PRIORITY 0118
RUEHGZ/AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU PRIORITY 0022
RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU PRIORITY 0014
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME
RUEHIN/AIT TAIPEI PRIORITY 0029
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA PRIORITY
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC//USDP/ISA/AP//
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC//J2/J3/J5//
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DHO-3//
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI//J00/J2/J3/J5//
RHEFAFM/DIRAFMIC FT DETRICK MD//MA-1A//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HO CHI MINH CITY 001413

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, INR, OES/STC, OES/IHA, MED
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE AND GH
STATE PASS TO HHS/OGHA (WSTIEGER, EELVANDER AND ABHAT)
USDA PASS TO APHIS
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FOR OSD/ISA/AP (LSTERN)
BANGKOK FOR RMO, CDC, USAID (JMACARTHUR AND MBRADY)
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [TBIO](#) [KFLU](#) [AMED](#) [AMGT](#) [CASC](#) [EAGR](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#)
SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: POULTRY OUTBREAKS REPORTED IN SOUTHERN
VIETNAM

REF: A. HCMC 0810
[1](#)B. HANOI 2803
[1](#)C. AND PREVIOUS

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: Animal health authorities in southern Vietnam's Mekong Delta have confirmed that H5N1 Avian Influenza (AI) has killed over 6,000 birds in several flocks in the provinces of Ca Mau and Bac Lieu. The birds, mostly ducklings, were illegally hatched and not vaccinated against AI. To date this year, there had been no prior confirmed AI outbreaks in poultry and no reported human AI cases in Vietnam. While the Government of Vietnam (GVN) takes the outbreak seriously and is working quickly to quarantine the area, initial improper disposal of diseased bird carcasses and cooler temperatures increase the possibility of further poultry outbreaks in the region.
End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Department of Animal Health (DAH) for the Mekong region confirmed to ConGen that on 6 December 490 chickens and 2,033 ducks died with clinical signs suggesting infection with avian influenza in the Tran Van Tho District of Ca Mau Province. The following day, an additional 3,550 ducks in five flocks were found dead in the Hoa Binh district of neighboring Bac Lieu Province. (Note: The two districts are nearly 60 kilometers apart.
End Note.) Laboratory tests later confirmed the presence

of the H5N1 strain of the virus. Pham Chung, Deputy Director of the Ho Chi Minh City DAH Representative Office, confirmed to EconOff that the AI specimens obtained from Bac Lieu and Ca Mau are highly pathological. Chung also reported that the GVN has officially declared AI outbreaks in the two infected districts.

¶3. (SBU) Animal health authorities reported that all of the infected poultry were one-month old hatchlings that had not been vaccinated against AI (Ref A). Hoang Van Nam, Director of the Department of Animal Health's Epidemic Unit, added that farm owners were reluctant to report the deaths because the poultry had been illegally hatched. Instead of contacting authorities to properly dispose of the dead birds, farmers dumped several thousand carcasses into canals and rivers over a five-day period, potentially spreading the disease to nearby districts and provinces. Nam added that cooler temperatures also facilitate the survival of the virus, heightening the continued risk to poultry flocks in the Mekong Delta.

¶4. (U) Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) Cao Duc Phat ordered provincial authorities to quickly quarantine and sterilize the area, cull all live poultry in close proximity to the infected flocks, and continue to investigate the cause of the outbreaks. Phat stated publicly during a December 19 meeting in Hanoi of the National Steering Committee on Bird Flu Control that provincial authorities would be held directly responsible for additional outbreaks.

¶5. (SBU) Dr. Phan Van Tu, Deputy Chief of Microbiology and Immunology at HCMC's Pasteur Institute, confirmed to EconOff that no suspected human cases have been detected in Ca Mau or Bac Lieu. The Ministry of Health (MOH) has requested that the Institute provide the two provinces with health experts to assess general preparedness in the event

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that cases of AI in humans are detected. Pasteur Institute assistance teams will arrive in Ca Mau and Bac Lieu on 25 December to begin their assessment.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: While nearly 140 million poultry have been vaccinated against AI this year, illegal hatching and smuggling of poultry remains a serious impediment to the GVN's bird flu control measures. Additionally, it appears there are still significant holes in the GVN's disease detection system. MARD Minister Phat was uncharacteristically blunt in his chastising of provincial authorities for allowing an outbreak of this magnitude to go unreported for so long. Despite MARD and MOH commitments to rapidly contain the virus, cooler flu season temperatures and the fact that several thousand diseased carcasses may have been spread outside quarantined areas suggest that further outbreaks of AI in poultry in the area are possible. End Comment.
CHERN